

Department of Public Health  
and Human Services

Section:  
APPLICATION PROCESSING

TANF CASH ASSISTANCE

Subject:  
Filing an Application

**Supersedes:** TANF 103-1 (07/01/07)

**References:** ARM 37.78.101, .102, .226 - .228 and .424

GENERAL RULE--Applications for TANF cash assistance are voluntary and initiated by the person in need, his/her authorized representative, or if incompetent or incapacitated, someone acting responsibly on his/her behalf.

Individuals may receive benefits as a member of only one assistance unit in Montana within the same month. However, because grant amounts vary between states/tribes, households applying for benefits that have already received TANF benefits in the month of application from another state/tribe may be eligible for a grant amount equal to the difference between what they have received and what Montana would issue. (See 501-1 page 2 for TEAMS coding.)

**APPLICATION  
FORM: HCS-250**

Application is made by completing Form HCS-250, "Application for Assistance" and submitting it to the Office of Public Assistance (OPA). Upon receipt of the application, the application must be registered in TEAMS.

In completing and signing the application, the individual attests to the truth, accuracy, and completeness of the information provided and declares that he/she understands the penalty for misrepresenting the family's circumstances, either by false statements or omission of information. The HCS-250 is a generic application and can be used for all programs.

**NOTE:** **A completed application cannot be required prior to scheduling an interview for TANF cash assistance.** An interview may be scheduled without any application being submitted. An interview must be scheduled when the front page of the application is received in the OPA.

Each adult household member must sign the last page of the application unless he or she is incompetent or incapacitated. If that situation exists, then the application must be signed by someone acting responsibly on his or her behalf in order for it to be considered a completed application.

Some individuals who do not have an authorized representative may need help in completing the application and accompanying forms. The OPA staff (volunteer, an administrative assistant, the Eligibility Case Manager,

etc.) should assist the individual. Any portion of the form completed by a person other than the applicant or the authorized representative should be initialed by the person taking the action.

**APPLICATION  
MADE BY OPA  
STAFF/FAMILY**

Special handling is given to an application made by an employee or by an employee's immediate family to avoid a conflict of interest and to ensure privacy. Cases having a conflict of interest between a household and an OPA employee are assigned to an OPA staff member accordingly by the OPA supervisor or designee.

**PLACE OF  
APPLICATION**

Applications may be made at an Office of Public Assistance in any county in Montana.

If an application is submitted in a county other than the applicant's residential county, the county receiving the application shall make an eligibility determination.

If the county of application is adjacent to the county of residence, the case will remain in that adjacent county at the participant's request. The WoRC contractor in the County that is maintaining the case, if the case is referred to WoRC would provide case management services.

If the county of application is **not** adjacent to the county of residence, the case **must** be transferred to the participant's county of residence or an adjacent county unless the household is considered temporarily absent from their home. See 'Temporary Absence' in TANF 302-1.

**NOTE:** If multiple programs are open (e.g., FS, TANF and FMA), all programs must be maintained in the same county OPA, and the strictest program policy (TANF) must be followed.

At the applicant's request, the receiving county may forward the application by fax (first page) and mail the original to the OPA in the applicant's county of residence or an adjacent county the same day it is received. The receiving county OPA will register, schedule an interview, and process the application.

When conditions preclude an individual from coming to the office, the opportunity to submit an application at a mutually agreed upon place, by mail, or through a home visit will be offered. Applications are accepted in the offices during regular working hours. Offices are closed on all state and/or federally designated holidays.

**TRIBAL TANF**

Applicants meeting the eligibility criteria for a Tribal TANF Plan may submit the application to the Tribal TANF Office in their location or to the local OPA. The OPA will forward the application to the Tribal TANF office as necessary. (TANF 103-7)

**APPLICATION DATE**

The application date is the date the first page of the application (HCS-250), is received in the OPA and date-stamped. Submission of the front page protects the application date.

**NOTE:** The OPA must attempt to provide a same day interview, send the A032 "TANF Interview Scheduled" notice if appropriate, provide the TANF Participation Information Pamphlet and send the A034 "TANF Participation Information" notice to households making application for TANF benefits. (TANF 103-2)

If the remaining pages of the application are completed and received within the 30-day application processing period, the household may be determined eligible, as long as all eligibility requirements are met as of the day the front page is submitted. If the remaining pages of the application are not received by the end of the **30-day application processing period**, the application is denied.

If the application had previously been received and processed for benefits other than TANF cash assistance (i.e., food stamps), it is still valid for **30** days following the date received. If TANF cash assistance is requested within those **30** days (even if already interviewed and processed for other benefits), the application date is the **original application date**, not the date additional benefits were requested.

If the household is not eligible on the application date, the application is less than **30** days old and **no action has been taken on the application for cash assistance** (i.e., approved or denied), the start date of cash assistance benefits can be changed with the written consent of the applicant. If the household does not want to request a new start date, the application would be denied.

**EXAMPLE:** Household turns in application on 7/10/07; interview is completed on 7/20/07. At the interview the Eligibility Case Manager discovers that the household was over resources as of the date of application but is under resources as of 7/12/07. As long as no action has been taken on the application, the household can request in writing that the benefit start date be changed to 7/12/07. If the participant does not want to request a new start date of benefits, the application would be denied because the household was

over resources as of the date of application. If the household is eligible in the second month, the Eligibility Case Manager can deny first month approve second and send TEAMS notice A124 'Approve 2<sup>nd</sup> Month Deny First'.

**If the application for cash assistance has been denied or withdrawn, but the original application is less than 30 days old, a Reapplication Addendum (HCS-249) would be required. (See below)**

#### **REAPPLICATION WITHIN 30-DAYS OF APPLICATION**

When an application has been properly denied and the original application is less than 30 days old, the household may reapply using a REAPPLICATION ADDENDUM (HCS-249). The new application date will be the date that the Reapplication Addendum is received in the OPA. The 30-day processing time frame will start from the date the Reapplication Addendum is received. **The start date of TANF benefits will be calculated as outlined in TANF 103-5.**

As the original application was denied properly, do not revert the case to open. Use the quick registration process.

**NOTE:** The OPA must attempt to provide a same day interview, send the A032 "TANF Interview Scheduled" notice, provide the TANF Participation Information Pamphlet and send the A034 "TANF Participation Information" notice to households making application with the HCS-249 form. (TANF 103-2)

**EXAMPLE:** Two parent household turns in original application on October 16. Household was interviewed on October 20 and was determined to be over income due to Dad's wages. The worker asked the household if they expected any changes and none were expected. The application is denied and a denial letter is mailed that day. On October 31, Mom calls and reports that Dad has left her and the children. She wants to reapply for assistance. Because the original application is less than 30 days old, she can reapply using the Reapplication Addendum.

The Eligibility Case Manager explains to Mom that the new date of application will be the date the Reapplication Addendum is received in the office. It is important that Mom be given the opportunity to review her original application to make changes and sign the Reapplication Addendum as soon as possible.

Mom reviews the application, makes corrections and signs the Reapplication Addendum on November 3. This becomes the new application date. An appointment to negotiate a FIA should be scheduled as soon as possible. The start date of benefits will be calculated as outlined in TANF 103-5.

**REAPPLICATION  
MORE THAN 30  
DAYS AFTER  
ORIGINAL  
APPLICATION DATE**

**If the effective date of case closure has passed or the original application is more than 30 days old and has been denied, a new application (HCS-250) is required.**

**DROP BOX**

Items placed in a Drop Box overnight or over a weekend should be date-stamped with the prior working day's date. Items placed in the Drop Box during a day's business hours will be date-stamped with that date.

**► FAXED INFO/  
APPLICATION**

Applications or items that are faxed to the Office of Public Assistance should be date-stamped with the date they are received. (This is contained on the fax.) All fax machines in the OPA office must be set to the correct time/date to ensure the accuracy of the date.

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